

Summer Greetings to Our Partners in Montana's Tourism Industry

As wildflowers begin blooming and days become longer, I want to take a moment to share some thoughts about our upcoming summer tourism season. As we know, much is being said about gas prices and the effect they will have on summer business. I believe it's important to hear what the "experts" are saying and to reflect on how Montana fits into the big picture.

The Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) is projecting a travel volume growth nationwide of less than 1% this year. In previous years, the TIA has consistently stated, "high gasoline prices historically cause Americans to make slight modifications to their travel plans but don't cause them to cancel." However, just last week, the TIA was beginning to have concerns that there are additional factors to be considered that could affect travel on a national level. In comparing gas prices to those of a year ago, a typical US driving vacation of 800 miles at today's higher prices, would add \$30-\$50 to the total trip costs. That equates to a dinner for two. This cost alone does not account for possible impacts on travel spending decisions, but the week-to-week costs of keeping their gas tanks full prior to a vacation is likely to cause a need for travelers to economize on their overall vacation spending.

According to a recent TIA survey, 71 percent of travelers surveyed said they would need to economize and when asked specifically about ways they might economize, the largest number said they would look to economize on food purchases (52%) followed by accommodations, activities and last, transportation. And almost one-third of those looking to economize are interested in destinations perceived to be more eco-

nomical. Another interesting note is the top three activities planned by summer travelers are visiting family and friends (55%), going to the beach or lake (38%) and visiting small towns or rural areas (27%). Other top activities identified by the TIA survey included visiting national and state parks, visiting historic sites, camping, hiking and climbing.

Montana has some advantages that may keep us above TIA's national average prediction:

- Montana is ranked one of the lowest for the cost of gas in the nation according to the AAA's fuel cost calculator, www.fuelcostcalculator.com.
- Montana's new advertising campaign "Find What You're Looking For in Montana" features family and friends enjoying our water and outdoor recreation, our national parks and our rural and relaxing vistas. This campaign which was launched this spring is producing record number inquiries to our website www.visitmt.com where daily user sessions averaged 19,978 in the month of April, our largest number ever.
- One of our premiere vacation destination regions, Glacier Country Tourism Region, has aggressively begun packaging their area attractions complete with a "Free Gas Card" promotion to provide opportunities for potential visitors to economize a vacation to Glacier Country.

The travel industry is a very dynamic and every changing industry. It's important that we continue to stay abreast of the situation and work together and think creatively to entice our visitors to our beautiful state of Montana!



Betsy Baumgart

Administrator, Montana Promotion Division

Winter Winners Take to the Slopes

As a part of Travel Montana's 2005-2006 Winter Campaign, Montana hosted two week-long getaways to Big Sky Country. Mother Nature cooperated, providing a stellar season of snow and a great backdrop for four first-time Montana visitors.

Joe Lewis of Mountain View, MO, was the winner of The North Face (TNF)/Travel Montana Winter Adventure Giveaway. Joe entered the contest while shopping online at www.thenorthface.com. Joe and his wife Marcia won a trip for six days and five nights to Big Sky Resort. The couple are avid skiers and enjoyed some of the season's finest snow via the Lone Peak Pass connecting Moonlight Basin and Big Sky Resort. They had never skied in Montana before and we hope this trip was the first of many more to come.

As part of the prize, they were joined on the slopes by Bozeman native, world famous mountaineer and TNF spokesperson, Conrad Anker. "Conrad was quite the ambassador for Montana. He wanted Joe's experience to be 'real and organic—like he was skiing with a buddy' and even offered to pick the guy up at the airport," said Bob Jones of Mercury Advertising, who was integral in fostering the partnership with TNF.

Travel Montana's promotional event in Minneapolis—in partnership with REI—gave away another trip to Montana. The winner, Terry Fitzpatrick of Lakeville, MN, won a ski vacation getaway for himself and a guest to one of five Montana ski resorts. Terry chose Big Sky Resort and invited his brother Mark along. They enjoyed five days and six nights at Big Sky and even managed a day trip to Yellowstone National Park. The brothers were thrilled with their Montana experience. "It was definitely the highlight of my year," Terry said.

Froggy Doo and Film Production Too

The Montana Film Office is very excited to have recently landed a major film project for Montana. Fairplay Pictures, out of L.A., has committed to produce a feature film in Gallatin and Park counties this summer. The film titled "A Plumm Summer," based on *The Happy Herb and Froggy Doo Show* is a family adventure based upon actual events that took place in Billings in 1966.

After scouting seven other states and provinces, the film's director explained that it was a combination of factors that helped Montana rise to the top including an attractive financial incentive, exceptional cooperation from the state including the Governor's Office and a strong resident crew base.

The production plans include eight weeks of pre-production and seven weeks of filming for a total of 15 weeks in Montana. The film is budgeted at \$3.5 million, most of which will be spent in Gallatin and Park counties. "These are new dollars coming into the local economy which have a significant economic impact" noted Commerce Director Tony Preite.

Heritage Tourism Grants Available

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) received a *Preserve America* grant of \$150,000 to fund their initiative known as The Montana Rural Heritage Experience.

The Montana Rural Heritage Experience *Preserve America* grants are available for Montana *Preserve America* communities that

have demonstrated a commitment to recognizing, designating and protecting local cultural resources.

Grants from \$3,000–\$15,000 are available on a matching basis. To obtain an application and program guidelines please contact Melisa Kaiser Synness at mkaisersynness@mt.gov. The grant deadline is July 10, 2006.

Montana Dinosaur Trail Update

The Montana Dinosaur Trail has expanded to include Rudyard's Depot Museum and Chinook's Blaine County Museum as it enters the second year of the trail promotion. The trail now features 15 facilities focused on paleontology in 12 eastern and central Montana communities.

Rudyard is partnering with Bozeman's Museum of the Rockies (MOR) as a satellite facility representing the "field" where MOR's paleontologists do their work. Their signature display is the "Oldest Sorehead," a fully articulated duckbill dinosaur species named *Gryposaurus* excavated by MOR from private land north of Rudyard. They also have a dinosaur mother and egg nest display and others moved from MOR during the Bozeman facility's recent display hall expansion.

The Blaine County Museum features *Hadrosaur*, *Gorgosaurus*, and *Ankylosaurus* fossils from the area, various marine fossils and a hands-on fossil room.

The facilities and the trail's funding partners are financing a reprint of the Montana Dinosaur Trail brochure and an update of its web portal—www.mtdinotrail.org. These

should be completed and ready for public use by the end of June 2006.



NATIONAL SIGNATURE EVENT
July 22 - 25, 2006

Clark's Stop Along the Yellowstone

Join the 200th anniversary of Captain William Clark's stop at Pompey's Pillar during the four-day "Clark on the Yellowstone" Signature Event. Tour the new Interpretive Center, attend symposiums with L&C biographers and Native American speakers and commemorate the National Day of Honor that recognizes the Native American perspective and contributions. Admission to Pillar and all events are free. For details, visit www.clarkontheyellowstone.org.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events:

June

- 4-6 Tourism Advisory Council Meeting—Hilton Garden Inn, Missoula, MT
- 16-18 Travel Alliance Partners' meeting—Little Rock, AR
- 24-26 Montana Preservation Workshop—Deer Lodge, MT

July

- 4 Montana Promotion Division offices closed. Happy 4th of July!

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
travelmontana.mt.gov

MONTANA

Travel Montana • Montana Film Office
Montana Department of Commerce

301 S. Park
PO Box 200533
Helena, MT 59620-0533

STD PRSRT
U.S. Postage
PAID
Helena, MT
Permit No. 20